

Effective Communication

Tips for Effective Non-Verbal Communication

Eye Contact: Maintain consistent eye contact to demonstrate interest and sincerity. Eye contact can show the other person that you are self-confident and a good listener. Keep your eye contact natural. Drop it occasionally so that the other person does not feel like you are staring.

Facial Expression: Allow your face to reflect your feelings, but don't overdo it. Exaggerated expressions can seem insincere. You can also use your face to break tension by maintaining a "soft" expression when a conversation is getting heated.

Touch: Firmness of your handshake can show the other person you are self-confident when you are meeting for the first time. A gentle touch on the shoulder can show empathy when someone is getting emotional. A hug can be friendly, comforting or caring when used with someone you know well. Be careful how you use touch with strangers and co-workers so it is not interpreted as inappropriate.

Gestures: Some people speak with their hands, punctuating their words with expansive hand gestures. This can emphasize your words, but be careful of doing it to an extreme. Keep your hand gestures small and natural, letting them emphasize what you are saying without overwhelming your words.

Active Listening Skills

Pay attention. One goal of active listening is to set a comfortable tone and allow time and opportunity for the other person to think and speak. Pay attention to your frame of mind as well as your body language. Be focused on the moment and operate from a place of respect.

Withhold judgment. Active listening requires an open mind. As a listener and a leader, you need to be open to new ideas, new perspectives and new possibilities. Even when good listeners have strong views, they suspend judgment, hold their criticism and avoid arguing or selling their point right away.

Reflect. Learn to mirror the other person's information and emotions by paraphrasing key points. Don't assume that you understand correctly or that the other person knows you've heard him. Reflecting is a way to indicate that you and your counterpart are on the same page.

Clarify. Don't be shy to ask questions about any issue that is ambiguous or unclear. Open-ended, clarifying and probing questions are important tools. They draw people out and encourage them to expand their ideas, while inviting reflection and thoughtful response.



Summarize. Restating key themes as the conversation proceeds confirms and solidifies your grasp of the other person’s point of view. It also helps both parties to be clear on mutual responsibilities and follow-up. Briefly summarize what you have understood as you listened, and ask the other person to do the same.

Share. Active listening is first about understanding the other person, then about being understood. As you gain a clearer understanding of the other person’s perspective, you can then introduce your ideas, feelings and suggestions. You might talk about a similar experience you had or share an idea that was triggered by a comment made previously in the conversation.

I-Statements

Four parts of an “I” Message:

1. “When you _____”

state observation

2. “I feel or I think _____”

state feeling

3. “Because _____”

state need

4. “I would prefer that _____”

state preference